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APPLICATIONS OPEN: VIRTUAL NATURAL RESOURCES CAMP FOR VIRGINIA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

High school students interested in natural resources are invited to attend the Virginia Academy of Natural Resources, a new virtual camp sponsored by Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) and Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts (VASWCD).

The Academy will take place July 12-16, 2021. Each morning will feature live virtual presentations from natural resource professionals, with daily themes of aquatics, forestry, soils, or wildlife. Each afternoon, participants will complete field explorations on their own, as well as further exploring topics through videos and reading material.

“Since both Camp Woods & Wildlife and Youth Conservation Camp were cancelled due to COVID-19, we wanted to offer an alternative way for teens to explore natural resource topics and careers,” said **Bonnie Mahl of VASWCD**.

“This camp has several unique twists you won’t find in most virtual camps,” added **Ellen Powell of VDOF**. The daily self-directed field studies – complete with instructions and materials for campers to use and keep – will connect campers with nature in their own backyards, local parks, or woods. In addition, small groups of campers will work together to showcase the natural resources of their region of the state, culminating in group presentations on Friday. The week will culminate with a natural resources competition modeled after the Virginia Dominion Energy Envirothon program.

Current 9th-12th graders may apply for the Virginia Academy of Natural Resources at <https://forms.gle/9mRUtyoaPRvFQY2N9>. Applications will be accepted through April 30. Once notified of acceptance, campers will receive a schedule, Zoom link, and materials for completing their daily field studies.

The coordinators want all Virginia high schoolers to feel this camp experience is available to them. The only cost for the week-long academy is \$25 to cover materials; however, financial aid is available. Please contact Ellen Powell at ellen.powell@dof.virginia.gov to discuss options.

About the Virginia Department of Forestry

The Virginia Department of Forestry protects and develops healthy, sustainable forest resources for Virginians. With nearly 16 million acres of forestland and more than 108,000 Virginians employed in forestry, forest products and related industries, Virginia forests provide an overall economic output of more than \$21 Billion annually.

Headquartered in Charlottesville, the Agency has forestry staff members assigned to every county to provide citizen service and public safety protection across the Commonwealth, which it’s been doing now for more than 100 years. VDOF is an equal opportunity provider.

About the Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts

The Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (VASWCD) is a private nonprofit association of 47 soil and water conservation districts in Virginia and is classified accordingly as a 501(c)(5). It is a voluntary, nongovernmental association of Virginia's districts. The Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts and its Educational Foundation, a 501(c)(3), provides and promotes leadership in the conservation of natural resources through stewardship and education programs. It coordinates conservation efforts statewide to focus effectively on issues identified by local member districts. Our mission is to serve and strengthen soil & water conservation districts in the stewardship of natural resources.